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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001411

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, AF S/E NATSIOS, AND AF/SPG  
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UN](#) [AU](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: UN/AU, SPLM IRONICALLY OUT OF STEP ON DARFUR  
STRATEGY

REF: A. KHARTOUM 01359

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 01384

Classified By: CDA Alberto Fernandez, Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d)

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Summary  
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[1](#)1. (C) The UN/AU and the SPLM are proceeding along two parallel tracks in their political initiatives for Darfur. While the SPLM hopes to hold a meeting in Southern Sudan in the next two weeks to bring unity to the SLM and prepare the movement for negotiations, the UN/AU have positioned themselves to hold a preparatory meeting--prior to the SPLM event--with all of the Darfur movements to cement a single negotiating team and an agenda for UN/AU-sponsored talks in October. Before determining a date and venue for their meeting, the UN/AU are awaiting the outcome of a senior SPLM delegation's visit to Abdulwahid al Nur and a more specific timeline and participant list for the SPLM conference. Ironically, the SPLM's approach to facilitate SLM unity, followed by negotiation preparation, would lay the groundwork for UN/AU-brokered talks. However, legitimate concerns about the SPLM's level of Darfur expertise and limited organizational capacity make it difficult to convince the UN/AU to more properly sequence their strategy for the next six weeks. End summary.

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SPLM to Focus on SLM Unity...  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) Meeting with Poloff and Norwegian Poloff on September 4, the UN/AU Joint Mediation Support Team's (JMST) point person for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), Vladimir Zhagora (please protect), outlined two parallel UN/AU and SPLM initiatives for the Darfur political process. Based on several recent conversations with the SPLM Darfur Taskforce and Government of Southern Sudan Vice President Riek Machar, who has emerged as the leading SPLM official handling the Darfur initiative, Zhagora said that the SPLM planned to concentrate on unifying the Sudan Liberation Movement (SLM) and building the capacity of all of the Darfur movements to prepare them for negotiations. Though the SPLM had initially envisioned a meeting of all the Darfur rebel groups--including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM)--Zhagora said they had since "done their homework" and were limiting an event in Southern Sudan to the SLM. (Note: JEM has often refused to attend a meeting in Southern Sudan. End note.)

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...But UN/AU Hedges Bet  
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¶3. (SBU) Doubting that the SPLM will be able to organize such an event, the UN/AU is hedging its bet and moving ahead with a meeting of the seven "leading personalities" and the associated Darfur rebel movements from the late-July Arusha conference. The UN/AU intends for the meeting to take place in mid-September before the SPLM event. The focus of this meeting would be to determine the manner in which the Darfur rebel factions are represented at UN/AU-sponsored talks in October as well as an agenda for those negotiations. Zhagora contended that all of the JEM and SLM factions could ultimately be represented by a single negotiating team at the October talks, commenting that political unity and the composition of a negotiating team were parallel tracks.

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SPLM Delegation Heads to Paris  
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¶4. (SBU) According to Zhagora, a delegation of senior SPLM officials is traveling to Paris September 4-7 in a final effort to secure SLM faction leader Abdulwahid al Nur's participation in a meeting in Southern Sudan. Riek had suggested to Zhagora that the SPLM would offer Abdulwahid the position of "head of delegation" to represent the SLM at the October talks as an incentive for his participation. (Note: It is unclear how the SPLM intends to secure agreement on such an appointment from the plethora of SLM factions. End note.) Riek planned to return to Juba on September 7, at which point the SPLM would finalize a schedule for their event.

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¶5. (SBU) Prior to AU Envoy Salim Ahmed Salim's August 24 meeting with SPLM officials in Juba, the UN/AU had planned a preparatory meeting for the Darfur movements in early September (Ref. A). After his meeting with First Vice President Salva Kiir, Salim gave his support for an SPLM meeting on the condition that it occur before September 15. To determine a date and venue for the UN/AU preparatory meeting, the JMST is now awaiting the outcome of the SPLM's Paris trip, the release of a schedule for the SPLM meeting, and a list of confirmed participants, said Zhagora.

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Questions Persists on SPLM Plan  
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¶6. (C) Zhagora acknowledged that several questions on the SPLM's strategy, including Abdulwahid's attendance, remain unanswered. Ahmed Diraige is "not excited" with an event in Juba, said Zhagora, based on ill will between him and the SPLM dating to the early 1990s and a fear that a re-unification of the SLM would undermine his political leverage. Eritrea's role in the SPLM initiative is also unclear. (Note: Acting Special Representative of the UN Secretary General told CDA Fernandez on September 1 that

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Asmara was using the SPLM to unite Darfur rebel commanders with Eritrean-backed political leaders (Ref. B). End note.) The SPLM had asked the UN/AU to provide transportation for the participants but also intended to present the UN/AU with a more detailed list of requirements for their event. Zhagora predicted the SPLM would also solicit support directly from donors, which many in the JMST view as a negation of the UN/AU lead in the political process as endorsed in the November 2006 Addis Ababa agreement and the Tripoli Consensus of April.

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Comment

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¶7. (C) We have long maintained that the severe fractures within the SLM will make it impossible for a limited number of rebel leaders to represent the views--and thus gain buy-in to the peace process--of the disparate factions without a strategy for SLM unity prior to negotiations. It is also unrealistic to expect that a joint JEM-SLM negotiating team can be formed unless the SLM adopt JEM's national political agenda--which would be a worrisome development in its own right. Ironically, the SPLM's approach to facilitate SLM unity, followed by negotiation preparation, would lay the groundwork for UN/AU-brokered talks. However, legitimate concerns about the SPLM's level of Darfur expertise and limited organizational capacity make it difficult to convince the UN/AU to more properly sequence their strategy for the next six weeks. End comment.

FERNANDEZ